

# The Devil and Tom Walker

## Interactive Reading Reading Guide

**EXERCISE A.** Read the Key Characters and Key Vocabulary and Terms sections. Then read the selection. Look back at the lists as needed during reading.

### Part 1: The Devil

#### KEY CHARACTERS

**Tom**—a miserly man living near Boston in 1727

**Tom's wife**—a woman with a bad temper, who is as miserly as her husband

**A stranger**—a man (the devil) whom Tom meets in the swamp

#### KEY VOCABULARY AND TERMS

**stagnant**—not flowing in a current or stream

**treacherous**—marked by hidden dangers, hazards, or perils

**eminent**—prominent; important

**consecrated**—dedicated

**persecutions**—acts of harassing; causing to suffer because of belief

**avarice**—excessive desire for wealth; greed

**resolute**—marked by firm determination

**sullen**—gloomily or resentfully silent

**propitiatory**—intended to appease or pacify

#### SORTING IT OUT

**EXERCISE B.** As you read "The Devil and Tom Walker," use the reading guide to help you keep track of key events. Read the first seven pages of the story from the beginning through the paragraph that begins "Tom consoled himself for the loss of his property. . . ." Answer the following questions on the lines provided.

1. Near what city is "The Devil and Tom Walker" set? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Where does Tom Walker's shortcut lead him? For what is the area known? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Describe the stranger that Walker meets. Who is he? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What offer does the stranger make Walker? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What does Walker's wife do when she finds out about Tom's meeting? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What happens to Walker's wife? \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 2: Tom Walker's Bargain

### KEY VOCABULARY AND TERMS

**haggle**—bargain

**obstinate**—stubborn

**squeamish**—easily offended or disgusted

**consideration**—recompense; payment

**security**—something given or pledged to make certain the fulfillment of an obligation

**censurer**—someone who finds fault with and criticizes as blameworthy

**zeal**—eagerness in pursuit of something

**superfluous**—extra; not needed

**parish**—a local church community

**piety**—devoutness in religion

**foreclose**—to take legal steps to bar a mortgager's right to redeem a mortgaged property

### SORTING IT OUT

**EXERCISE C.** Read the Key Vocabulary and Terms section. Then read from "At length, it is said, when delay had whetted Tom's eagerness . . ." to the end of the story. Answer the following questions on the lines provided.

7. What deal does Tom Walker make with the devil? What is the result of the deal?

8. What does Walker tell the land jobber who begs him to extend his loan for a few months because Tom already has so much money?

9. What finally happens to Walker?

10. What happens to Walker's riches?

11. What is the saying or proverb that became popular in New England as a result of the story?

## Washington Irving (1783–1859)

### THE DEVIL AND TOM WALKER (Pages 126–136)

#### Understanding the Writer and His Background

1. List three facts about the early life and profession of Washington Irving.

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Give the title and a brief description of the subject of Irving's first substantial work.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Understanding the Selection

3. Why does Tom Walker refuse the devil's first offer?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Identify three of the stories explaining the disappearance of Tom Walker's wife.

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

STUDY GUIDE—CONTINUED

5. In their second meeting, what bargain does Tom Walker strike with the devil?

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6. As Tom Walker grows older, what precautions does he take to cheat the devil out of the conditions of that bargain?

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### Understanding Literary Elements

7. In literature, the devil has taken on many different forms. What details of Irving's description of the devil (page 130, column 1, last paragraph) fit the image of the Americas? What details are more in keeping with tradition?

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### Writing and Responding to Literature

8. Writers acquaint us with their characters by telling us about them and by showing us what they say and how they act. In the selection, find an example in which Irving tells us about a quality of Tom Walker's personality. Then, in your own words, tell how that quality is demonstrated by something Tom Walker says or does.

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# Active READING GUIDE



## The Devil and Tom Walker by Washington Irving (page 203)

As you read "The Devil and Tom Walker," complete the graphic organizers below. In the boxes at the top, fill in the characters' names, the setting description, and the central problem. Then list the major story events on the lines below.

Characters	Setting	Problem

	Major Events
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

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**Selection  
Vocabulary  
Test**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_ SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

**Washington Irving     *The Devil and Tom Walker***

(Page 128)

**SELECTION VOCABULARY TEST**

A. From the list below, select the *best* definition of each of the italicized words in the numbered sentences. Place the letter of the definition you choose in the space provided. (4 points each)

- |                                  |                         |  |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| a. condition of being unmarried  | f. dangerously unstable | l. impossible to capture; impenetrable |
| b. deserted                      | g. a scolding woman     | m. frequent and widespread             |
| c. evoking sympathy              | h. to guess             | n. stale, unclear from lack of motion  |
| d. a wading bird with a deep cry | i. to kneel in humility |  |
| e. distinct                      | j. to frustrate         |  |
|                                  | k. with suspicion       |  |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Earthquakes were *prevalent* in New England about the year 1717.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Tom Walker and his wife lived in a *forlorn*-looking house.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The horse's ribs were as *articulate* as the bars of a gridiron.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The thin moss merely tantalized and *balked* the horse's hunger.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Then he would look *piteously* at any passer-by.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Tom's wife was a *termagant*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Any wayfarer eyed the den of discord *askance*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Tom often wished he were still enjoying his *celibacy*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. In the swamp, there were dark and *stagnant* pools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Tufts and roots afforded *precarious* footholds among deep sloughs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Tom paced carefully, like a cat, along the *prostrate* trunks of trees.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Suddenly, he was startled by the screaming of the *bittern*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. The ancient Native Americans considered their fort to be *impregnable*.

**B.** From the list below, select the *best* definition of each of the italicized words in the numbered sentences. Place the letter of the definition you choose in the space provided (4 points each)

- |                                      |                               |                                 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. a ritual chant to raise spirits   | e. of dark complexion         | k. split, as by an axe          |
| b. a moneylender charging high rates | f. dead and decomposing flesh | l. conceited showiness          |
| c. to destroy so no trace is left    | g. friendly, peaceful         | m. excessive thrift; stinginess |
| d. to gain by pacifying              | h. ill-tempered               | n. ominous                      |
|                                      | i. firm; determined           |                                 |
|                                      | j. strongbox                  |                                 |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Stories handed down told of savages holding *incantations* here.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Tom listened to the *boding* cry of the tree toad.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Then he uncovered a *cloven* skull with a tomahawk in it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. "Let that skull alone!" said the *swarthy*-faced stranger.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Only someone who *propitiated* Old Scratch's favor could find the money.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Tom could not *obliterate* the black finger print burnt into his forehead.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The more his wife talked, the more *resolute* Tom became not to please her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The man carried the bundle with an air of *surlly* triumph.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Tom heard the clamor of *carriion* crows hovering about a cypress tree.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Old Scratch proposed that Tom should turn *usurer*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Later Tom did not finish his vast house because of his *parsimony*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. The trustees searched Tom's *coffers* and found nothing but cinders.

# Vocabulary

## PRACTICE

### The Devil and Tom Walker (page 202)

#### VOCABULARY

prevalent *adj.* widespread

discord *n.* lack of agreement or harmony; conflict

impregnable *adj.* incapable of being taken by force; able to resist attack

melancholy *adj.* depressing; dismal; gloomy

surmise *v.* to infer from little or no evidence; guess

obliterate *v.* to remove all traces of; to erase

speculate *v.* to engage in risky business ventures, hoping to make quick profits

parsimony *n.* excessive frugality; stinginess

#### EXERCISE A Words in Context

Write the word from the word list that belongs in the blank in each sentence.

1. She invested all her savings in the land deal, but he refused to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The folk ballad was mournful and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Though polio has almost disappeared, not long ago it was quite \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The landlord would not spend money on repairs because of his \_\_\_\_\_.
5. No foe could pierce the high stone walls that made the castle \_\_\_\_\_.
6. We'll write our initials in the sand, but the surf will \_\_\_\_\_ them.
7. Since you won't tell me any details, I can only \_\_\_\_\_ what happened.
8. They got along well at first; later, cramped conditions created \_\_\_\_\_.

#### EXERCISE B Synonyms and Antonyms

On the line, write whether the pairs of words are *synonyms* (words with nearly the same meanings) or *antonyms* (words with nearly opposite meanings).

1. parsimony – generosity \_\_\_\_\_
2. discord – peace \_\_\_\_\_
3. surmise – suppose \_\_\_\_\_
4. prevalent – common \_\_\_\_\_

#### EXERCISE C Responding to the Selection

Imagine that Tom Walker had decided to refuse the devil's offer. On the back of this sheet, write a letter of refusal from Walker to the devil. Use at least SIX of the vocabulary words in your letter.



A **tall tale** is a humorous story that contains exaggeration and invention. Often the exaggeration in tall tales comes from outlandish comparisons.

Example: They [Tom and his wife] were so miserly that they even conspired to cheat each other.

Using the following examples from "The Devil and Tom Walker," tell what each comparison describes and how it contributes to the exaggerated tone of the story.

Comparisons
1. ribs . . . as articulate as the bars of a gridiron (page 204)
2. looking like alligators sleeping in the mire (page 205)
3. sent them at length, dry as a sponge (page 211)
4. you would have thought you heard the souls of the poor debtors (page 211)
5. as if heaven were to be taken by force of lungs (page 211)

In a group, create an excerpt from a tall tale. Have each person in turn contribute a sentence containing an exaggerated comparison. Have someone in the group write down the story as it is created.

## Critical Thinking and Reading Worksheet

### *Inferring Cultural Attitudes*

The people in "The Devil and Tom Walker" are American colonists living in New England in the late 1720's and early 1730's. Their beliefs and cultural attitudes are conveyed to us indirectly through dialogue and the narrator's comments about the characters and what happens to them.

Following are passages from Irving's tale. On the lines below each passage, identify an inference that you can draw about the cultural attitudes of the New Englanders of this period.

1. "Tom had a wife as miserly as himself: they were so miserly that they even conspired to cheat each other . . . many and fierce were the conflicts that took place about what ought to have been common property."

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2. "I [the Devil] amuse myself by presiding at the persecutions of Quakers and Anabaptists. I am the great patron and prompter of slave dealers, and the grandmaster of the Salem witches."

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3. "About the year 1727, just at the time that earthquakes were prevalent, in New England and shook many tall sinners down upon their knees. . . ."

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4. "Such was the end of Tom Walker and his ill-gotten wealth. Let all griping money-brokers lay this story to heart."

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